





## RUSH-BEARERS AT THE PRESENT TIME.

In Grasmere's hill-girt valley,  
When Summer's at the full,  
The children of the dalesmen hold  
A pretty festival.

The Church of good St. Oswald  
Possessed in days of yore— [there  
For the hardy race who worshipp'd  
A rugged, earthen floor.

As we may well imagine  
This floor, so damp and cold,  
Gave influenza to the young—  
Rheumatics to the old.

'Twas an outrage to all feeling  
(Especially of the shins)  
To have to kneel in mud and mire  
When they confessed their sins!

And so to make things pleasant,  
And save the doctor's fees, [dry  
They strewed the Church with rushes  
And thus got warmth and ease.

But when they'd grown more polished  
And grown their worldly store—  
Discarding mother earth and reeds,  
They made a wooden floor.

Yet still we know old customs  
Will round men's hearts entwining,  
And once a year were rushes brought  
As in the "Auld Lang Syne."

But now they decked their burdens  
With flowers of every hue, [walls  
And hung them round the old Church  
And stuck them on each pew,

And the children of the valley  
To this day faithful keep  
The custom of their hardy sires  
Who in the churchyard sleep.

For when hot July's waning,  
They to the lake repair  
To pull the ree is as I like white  
That grow in plenty there.



## St. Oswald's Church, Decorated with Rush-Bearings.

Pews in the Time of Old.

With these—and ferns and mosses,  
And flowers of varied dye  
They hasten home, and all day long  
Their busy fingers ply.

Then in the quiet evening  
Ere dew begins to fall,  
They range their floral trophies on  
The Churchyard's low-topp'd wall.

Here crosses without number,  
Of every shape and size, [shields  
And wreaths, triangles, crowns, and  
Appear in flow'ry guise.

And verses too, and mottoes,  
Words ta'en from Holy Writ—  
And some designs which mock the  
We'll call them nondescript [pen,

But all are glad and happy  
Who in the pageant share,  
And the archbishops with the nondescripts  
Are proud as any there.

And proudly struts each youngster,  
When, devices gay in hand,  
They round about the village march  
To the music of the band.

Like to a string of rainbows,  
Appears that cortege bright,  
Winding 'mong the crooked lanes,  
In the golden evening light!

And coming to the Church again,  
They bear their garlands in, [lane  
And fix them round the time-stained  
While the bells make merry din.

But hark! before departing  
From that house of prayer,  
The incense of a grateful hymn  
Floats on the quiet air!

And so the village pageant  
Ends in sounds of peace—  
We trust the time may never come  
This pretty show shall cease!

## RUSH-BEARERS' HYMN.

Our Fathers to the House of God,	Sing we the good Creator's praise,
As yet a building rude,	Who gives us sun and showers,
Bore offerings from the flowery sod,	To cheer our hearts with fruitful days,
And fragrant rushes strewed.	And deck our world with flowers.
May we, their children, ne'er forget	These of the great Redeemer's grace,
The pious lesson given,	Bright emblems here are seen,
But honour still together meet,	He makes to smile the desert place,
The Lord of Earth and Heaven.	With flowers and rushes green.

All glory to the Father be.

All glory to the Son,

All glory, Holy Ghost to Thee,

While endless ages run.—AMEN.

### NOTES ON THE RUSH-BEARING.

THE quaint old Church at Grasmere, dedicated to St. Oswald, is generally supposed to have been built long prior to the Norman Conquest, as it is mentioned in Doomsday Book, and extant records of the Church extend back over a period of nearly eight centuries.

The building is of a most primitive character, and up to 1840, the floor consisted merely of the bare earth, which it was the custom to strew with rushes immediately after the hay-harvest in each year.

From this practice arose the "Rush-Bearing," described in the p. takes place annually on the Saturday St. Oswald's Day. The proceeding about six o'clock on the evening of following day, Sunday, special service Church in aid of the Funds of Grasmere.

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